



Race to the Top Update Fall 2011 Charter Schools Project

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Charter schools are an integral part of Maryland's public education landscape. The State's charter schools have often served at the forefront of innovation and have represented much-needed choices for families who previously had few or no options for their children. As the charter movement grows in Maryland, the State will focus its efforts on ensuring not only the quantity of its charter schools but also their quality.

The Race to the Top (RTTT) funds enable the State to provide **additional opportunities to ensure that charter schools** are true **partners in Maryland's education reform strategy**. This is particularly relevant when it comes to the State's persistently lowest-achieving schools. Charter schools have a role in the **turnaround strategy** both as one of the options allowed in the school improvement Federal guidelines and as a way to enable local education agencies (LEAs) to develop portfolios of schools with innovative approaches.

Maryland will use Race to the Top (RTTT) funds to help advance the crucial goals of **1) making sure that only high-quality charter schools exist and thrive** across the state, **2) creating incentives** for charter schools to be **used as a school turnaround strategy**, and **3) improving** the transparency and consistency of the **charter school authorizing process**.

GOAL 1: The Maryland State Department of Education Office of School Innovation (OSI) along with the Title I Office and the Breakthrough Center, will develop a partnership with two school systems with the highest number of low-performing schools to convert schools in restructuring to charter schools.

- The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of School Innovations (OSI) along with the Title I Office and the Breakthrough

Center has developed a partnership with the Baltimore City Schools (City Schools) to convert schools in restructuring to charter schools.

- The Furman L. Templeton Academy in Baltimore City Schools is the first restart charter school identified in the Race to the Top Charter School project. The restart charter school has begun its partnership with Midtown Academy, a high-performing charter school, to create a professional learning community.

GOAL 2: The Office of School Innovation will advance the work of designing Maryland's Charter School Quality Standards to develop a framework for charter schools to conduct self-assessment every three years for improvement and development efforts.

- The Office of School Innovations has designed ***charter school quality standards*** to develop a framework for charter schools to conduct self-assessments every three years to help guide improvement and development efforts.
- The OSI has facilitated three focus group sessions for identified charter school stakeholders, county charter school liaisons, operators and school-based staff this year to review a draft of the *Maryland Quality Charter School Standards* and give specific feedback regarding the content and practicality of the documents.
- *The Maryland Charter School Quality Standards Implementation Guide* will be piloted beginning January 2011 in three charter schools in Maryland.

GOAL 3: Strengthen the charter school authorizing processes.

*Maryland recognizes that quality charter school authorizing ensures that there is a critical balance of school autonomy and accountability, while serving students and public interest.

- The Office of School Innovations has begun to strengthen the Charter School Authorizing Processes by ensuring that counties adhere to the *Maryland Charter School State Law* and the *Maryland Charter School State Policy*.
- The OSI held its first *Maryland Charter School Authorizers Conference* on April 29, 2011 to discuss the *Maryland Charter School State Policy* and how it aligns with best practices for authorizers with

the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and *the* implications for each LEA's charter school policy.